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Ames' Long Lasting Businesses

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AMES' LONGEST SURVIVING BUSINESSES

By Elise Taylor

Photographs by Brandon Alvarado & Anne Walsh

RIDICULOUS RAGS



Ridiculous Rags is open Tuesday through Saturday from noon to 5 p.m.

It's the place to go for an original Halloween costume, a kickass outfit for a fraternity or sorority theme party or just feeding your need for something vintage.

Ridiculous Rags, 2414 Lincoln Way, was founded 14 years ago by two women with a common love for vintage clothing and costuming.

"We both had such a love for theater costuming," said Lynn Champlin Lloyd, co-owner of Ridiculous Rags with Nanci McCune. "We thought, 'What is one thing that isn't in town at all? And at that time, nothing like this was.'"

Soon after going into business together, Lloyd and McCune began the hunt for—you guessed it—ridiculous looking rags.

"We knew you could take recycled clothes and turn them into costumes. We looked all over Goodwill, Salvation Army-type stores," Lloyd said. "Whenever we would go on vacation, we'd look there. I love looking for certain kinds of things, such as funny pants or hats. Anything fun that people can play in!"

Halloween is the busiest time of the year for Ridiculous Rags, where at times lines of people wait outside hoping to find that perfect costume. Other common clientele are students in the Greek community looking for house party costumes and bartenders digging for treasures when their bars are having theme nights.

Lloyd said she loves helping customers pick out costumes because

of her keen eye for putting different pieces together.

"Say someone wants to be a pirate. Well, we don't have that costume hanging on a hanger, but we'd be able to find someone a tuxedo shirt with some ruffling, some scarves to accessorize with, and with some crazy jewelry. It's not like what everyone else has, which makes it more fun."

Her 14 years at Ridiculous Rags have been filled with a lot of good memories, Lloyd said, especially when helping students find their perfect outfit and seeing the joy in their eyes.

"Guys especially are a lot of fun. They'll put on their leisure suits and just get so into character. They often come in here not expecting to find anything and when they do, they are just so excited. I think that is what's really kept us here. It's not about the money, it's about the joy of costuming. I love being around college students."

And it's the college students who Lloyd credits as the most important reason she's stayed in business all these years.

"Most of them have been really great to us. Maybe that's just Iowa State kids, but 14 years later, that's one thing that has stayed real constant. The kids who come in are just so fun!"

Ridiculous Rags is open Tuesday through Saturday from noon to 5 p.m. **E**



GRANDMA'S ATTIC

It might be easy to overlook as you walk along Welch Avenue in search of a Jimmy John's sandwich or a couple of drinks at Mickey's. Situated among the restaurants, tattoo parlors and bars of Campustown is Grandma's Attic, a fun shop that sells an eclectic mix of blankets, beads, jewelry, oils and incense—that can be smelled the second you walk in the door.

Grandma's Attic, 125 Welch Ave., was founded three and a half years ago by Christie Radach after Grandma's Jewelry Box, a Lincoln Way establishment and a sister store to Grandma's Attic, closed after 18 years of business.

"We literally had customers that would sit down at the back table of the store and cry, saying, 'you can't close!'" Radach said.

Radach worked at Grandma's Jewelry Box, a similar jewelry store, for nine out of the business' 18 years of existence.

"We had such a loyal following at Grandma's Jewelry Box that when we closed down, carrying on the business just seemed like the thing to do," Radach said.

After making knotted friendship bracelets before a rock show and coming home with more money than she originally brought, Radach figured she could make a business out of jewelry. And she's been doing so for about 25 years. Radach began teaching knitting classes and opened up her first business where she sold jewelry at craft shows.

"Out of the blue, Joan Dau [the owner of Grandma's Jewelry Box] called me around Thanksgiving break, pleading for help because all of her employees had left for the holiday," Radach said. "I started working for her then, and the rest was history!"

To this day, the history of Grandma's

Jewelry Box is far from forgotten. "We have many people come in who I've known for ten to 14 years because they used to shop at Grandma's Jewelry Box. We've always had very, very loyal customers."

When the time came to name her new store, Radach didn't have too much trouble. "Everyone calls me Grandma, even though I'm definitely not a grandma yet!" Radach laughed. "When we opened up the new place, I knew we had to have something with the word 'grandma' in it. Joan didn't want us to use Grandma's Jewelry Box anymore, so I figured 'Grandma's Attic' would be good, because you never know what you're going to find when you're looking through your grandma's attic!"

Radach loves helping customers with questions or help with projects. One of her craziest projects was helping out a bride-to-be create around 200 wine charms for her wedding reception.

"I have a lot of fun working on projects and giving advice," Radach said. "My basic business philosophy is that I want you to leave the store thinking, 'well I'm pretty sure I didn't see everything,' and when you come back you say, 'I didn't expect to see that when I was in here!' It's important to keep it interesting."

Grandma's Attic is open Tuesday from 12 to 8 p.m., Wednesday through Friday from 12:30 to 6:30 p.m., and Saturday from 12:30 to 6 p.m. **E**



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